Pocket Gopher

Gophers eat a variety of plants—leafy vegetables above ground and roots and tubers underground. They constitute an important food source for many wild animals; owls, hawks, foxes, badgers, coyotes, weasels, and snakes eat gophers. Gophers also play a major role in soil dynamics. Their constant digging results in vertical cycling of soil. This counteracts the packing effect of grazers, makes the soil more porous, reduces water run off and provides increased aeration for plants.

Gophers dig two types of burrows—long, winding, shallow tunnels to obtain food and deep tunnels for shelter with chambers for food and nesting. Fan-shaped mounds of loose dirt distinguish gopher holes from circular mole hills.

For gophers eating plants, tunneling:

- Place hardware cloth (1/4" or 1/2" mesh) 18–20" deep around the perimeter of your garden to exclude gophers. Wrap commercial tree wrap around ornamental plants and trees.
- Plant daffodils, oleander, Euphorbia lathyris (also known as gopher plant or mole plant) or other plants that gophers dislike. Check at your local nursery for suggestions.

To protect plant roots:

- Plant in underground baskets 1/4" hardware cloth. Line all planting holes and beds—sides and bottoms—with galvanized wire mesh or light gauge mesh when planting trees and shrubs; they need protection only while young and vulnerable. Use a heavier mesh for permanent beds where you grow annuals and vegetables. Be sure to place the mesh deep enough to accommodate growing root crops and bulbs, and leave at least 3" of mesh above ground.
- Make your own root protectors using 3/4" hexagonal wire netting or purchase them ready-made.